

Experimentally Considered:

IN A

SERMON

PREACHED ON LORD'S DAY

APRIL 6, 1800,

AT

Waltham Abbey, Essex;

ON

ROMANS VII. 23:

Published at the request of some who heard it.

BY W. BRACKETT.

TAKEN IN SHORT-HAND.

‘HE THAT IS SPIRITUAL, JUDGEETH ALL THINGS, YET HE HIMSELF
IS JUDGED OF NO MAN.’

PAUL.



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Captivity without Dominion,
EXPERIMENTALLY CONSIDERED.

A Sermon, etc.

ROMANS VII. 23.

BUT I SEE ANOTHER LAW IN MY MEMBERS,
WARRING AGAINST THE LAW OF MY MIND,
AND BRINGING ME INTO CAPTIVITY TO
THE LAW OF SIN, WHICH IS IN MY MEM-
BERS,

THIS celebrated Epistle of Paul to the Romans, appears, from its subscription, to have been written by the Apostle while he tarried at Corinth; and may be considered as a summary of all the grand and glorious Doctrines of the Gospel; given and continued for the use and consolation of the Church of Christ, to the end of Time. It was particularly addressed to the Church of God at Rome, as the beloved of the Lord Jesus Christ; even to such, who, as they were effectually called by Him, were

were evidently the subjects of his grace. This may be observed by referring to the 6th. and 7th. Verses of the First Chapter of this Epistle: where he calls them ‘beloved of God—called to be Saints.’

The drift, or principal scope and design of the Apostle, appears to have been, to state in a clear, and explicit manner, those Doctrines which relate to God’s choice of his People, and the Plan in which he is glorified in their Justification and Salvation. He states *all* as arising from the everlasting, free, distinguishing, unchanging love of God in Christ Jesus, towards his People. He endeavours to silence every one who would be disposed to reply—anticipates the objections which would arise in the minds of some; and, shall I say, the *daring insolence* of others, who would call God to their bar, and say, ‘Who hath resisted his Will?’ In the statement of these Doctrines, he not only asserts God’s *Sovereignty*, but also points out the *Way* in which Justification is enjoyed in the breasts of the redeemed; namely, that Faith is drawn forth into act and exercise—that it apprehends Christ, or lays hold of the blessings of grace revealed—and, then it brings peace, rest and assurance to the mind. *Isa. chap.*

xxvi. *ver.* 3. 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.'

In this Chapter in particular, it may be observed, the Apostle shews us, that though Believers are free from the dominion of Sin, it still dwells in them, and is felt by them—is matter of humiliation and mourning before God: that, though Believers are not liable, nor ever were liable, in the proper sense of the word, to the wrath or displeasure of God; to that condemnation which follows upon transgression, where Sin is charged; that, though they are *free* from every ground of *charge*; yet they are not freed from the *plague* of Sin. The whole of this Chapter seems to me tending to shew, as exemplified in the experience of Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ, called by divine grace; a specimen, if I may so speak, of the experience of all the Saints; that, the same subjects who may triumph in the Lord Jesus, and in that salvation which flows through him; may nevertheless in the present state, and to the end of their pilgrimage, have cause with him to cry, 'O wretched Man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death.'

With respect to the subject chosen for our meditation, I may say, it appears

ACCORDING

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ACCORDING TO EVIDENCE, that it is a subject more exercising to the minds of the Children of God *in general* than to Ministers of the Gospel *in particular*; for, in public we seldom hear it spoken of; or, but slightly touched upon: perhaps, from its being difficult to place, and arrange under proper heads, those things between which the Apostle here makes a nice and interesting distinction—The LAW IN THE MEMBERS, and, the LAW OF THE MIND. Probably it may be thought by some, rather a daring attempt of mine. But, in answer to such observers I would reply, I do not pretend to enter *fully*—nor do I pretend to arrange under their different heads, what may come under exactly and pointedly, all the different distinctions of the Law in the Members, and the Law of the Mind. To do this JUDICIOUSLY and FULLY, I think is NEVER TO BE EXPECTED IN THE PRESENT STATE; so great and innumerable are the windings and turnings of Sin in the Heart, and so deep and subtle in its operations; that we cannot comprehend it. We discover it by degrees, and painfully observe the workings of Sin in the Members; or what may come under the denomination of such; but we can neither destroy its powerful working,
nor

nor fully arrange its hateful acts: nor is it possible for us nicely to distinguish and draw the line, where the Law in the Members ends; and where the Law of the Mind begins.

However, these considerations did not deter me, it is evident, from offering a few observations upon the subject. We may perhaps improve by a few observations when we cannot fully investigate the subject. As such I shall

I. Attempt the distinction which is here observable in the Text, between the Law in the Members, and the Law of the Mind.

II. Take notice of the painful influence of the former lamented by the Apostle, as bringing him into captivity—as being so powerful in its operation, so great and successful in its influence: ‘Bringing me,’ saith he, ‘into captivity to the Law of Sin, which is in my Members.’

I. I shall notice *First*, That the Law in the Members may be admitted to comprehend, more than the mere *sensitive* powers; or those which are common to brutes. Some Persons have attempted to argue as though human depravity rested, if I may so speak, only

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in the workings of the corporeal part, or, at most, only as connected with the sensitive; thus leading men vainly to imagine themselves no more sufferers by the Fall than the animal. But, I apprehend, nothing is more clear in the word of God, and of which solemn truth there is evidence every moment, that *more* was affected by Sin—by the Transgression of our first Parents, than our mere sensitive powers. The understanding is become darkness. We may find, in the sure testimony of God's revealed Will, those works are attributed to the Flesh, frequently, which cannot with the least propriety be applied to mere animal powers. Hence we find in this Epistle to the Romans *chap. viii. ver. 7, 8.* compared with Epistle to the Colossians *chap. v. ver. 20, 21.* such as 'Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, sedition, heresies' and so on: these, I say, would be improper; as applied merely to the sensitive powers. Something more is intended; this I shall endeavour to prove; shewing, that both Body and Mind—the sensitive powers, and rational Soul—every power and faculty of the Man, was ruined by transgression: the Image of God, or moral rectitude, *entirely* obliterated.

According

According to some men's suggestions, the creature Man is only partially fallen. Be not deceived; He is *altogether* fallen—*altogether* depraved. As such he is fitly represented in the sacred Scriptures; in which the Holy Ghost has used those fit and lively figures, which convey to our minds the full force of this solemn truth 'thou hast destroyed thyself.' We are therein described as being 'dead in trespasses and sins'—as bearing the image of the Devil, by transgression. MAN in no succeeding age will answer to a better description than God has given of him in the antediluvian world, or time before the flood 'that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was *only evil continually*.' Hence the Apostle asserts, in direct contrast to such state of total depravity, that whatever real good is in us, it must be supernatural—OF GOD. 'It is God,' saith he 'which worketh in you both to *will* and to *do* of his own good pleasure.'

Secondly. The Apostle, in our text, more minutely enters into the distinction between 'the Law *in* the Members and the Law of the Mind.' Now, this must be considered applicable to the Mind either as *depraved*, or, as *renewed*; it cannot possibly apply to the former: for, the Mind as *depraved* cannot be

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AT WAR WITH the *depraved sensitive powers*—in this sense, the Law in the Members and the Law of the Mind are in perfect unison, that is to say, in perfect agreement—there is no such War, as the Apostle speaks of, nor contention in man, while in a state of nature: nor can he, in such state, experience a warfare between the contention of the Mind, and that of the Members; in the sense of the Apostle in our text. So that, it must apply only to the Mind as *renewed*.

By the Law of the Mind, then, I understand is intended A PRINCIPLE OF DIVINE GRACE IMPLANTED: as being specifically different—entirely distinct from what the man was, in a state of nature. Be this apprehended, or enjoyed, sooner or later, is no part of my business, at present, to enquire—whether it be actually enjoyed by the subject immediately; or, whether, for wise purposes, the vessels of mercy be drawn through a long continued series of pain, anguish and terror—is no part, I say, of the important and highly interesting subject under present consideration. But, I apprehend, as before observed, that this Law of the Mind, is a principle of grace implanted in the soul; and which, may be considered as bearing the

the image of Christ. I know of no other signification so proper to those words of the Apostle, recorded in his Epistle to the Colossians, *chap. iii. ver. 10.* where he speaks of being 'new created—as bearing the image of Christ, his resemblance—as having put on Christ—renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision' and so on.

As a Law then, this principle of grace may be considered to operate: and, I think, with the greatest propriety the language of our text may be applied to it; compared with Rom. viii. 5. 'They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh: but, they that are after the spirit, the things of the spirit.' Observe—the MIND in this verse, is the PRINCIPLE concerned—and, as applied to a principle of divine grace in the Soul, I consider it agreeing with the language and sense of our text 'the Law of the Mind' or, a principle of grace. So that 'they that are after the spirit do mind the things of the spirit.' And, the Apostle observes in the 6th. or following verse to those words, that 'to be carnally minded is death,' and demonstratively argues the POWER and INFLUENCE OF DIVINE GRACE, as a principle

ciple in the soul, opposing such carnal propensity ; and, that it is, in the regenerate, **THE LAW OF THE MIND.**

Further, this may be considered in a two-fold point of view. (1.) As *disposing the WILL.* This Law of the Mind disposes the Will—this was clearly the case with the Apostle, thus expressed in *ver. 18. of this chapter*: ‘To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not.’ Thus, it establishes the proposition, that, this principle of grace, as the Law of the Mind, has influence upon the will of the subject. There could be no dominion without it—I say, and will be bold to assert, there can be no dominion without it. It appears to me we might with as great propriety assert that, **GRACE** reigns, and **SIN** reigns at one and the *same time* in the subject; as that, the **WILL**, deliberately, is subject to them *both.* I am therefore inclined to think, at present, that a principle of divine grace in the Soul, is the Law of the Mind; and that, this has influence on the Will. ‘To will is present with me.’ Thus dominion is evidenced, inasmuch as the will is concerned—the subject is ‘made willing.’ The constraining influence of divine grace being such, that it operates effectually, without putting force,

force, or restraint upon, the freedom of the Will. (2.) It has also, so far as I can discover at present, some influence in what may be termed the *AFFECTIONS*. If Affections be defined, *thought with approbation*, then, I say, it is evident in a subject of grace, that THIS 'Law of the Mind' has influence upon THIS 'thought with approbation.' The Affection I am speaking of may be denominated *spiritual*—distinct from the more carnal incitements from the sensitive powers in man. Spiritual objects, are the objects of spiritual affection; nor can it be exercised upon any thing more gross than itself. For *this reason* we may observe, spiritual affection leads us to God, and the things of God—to contemplate the riches of divine grace in the salvation of Sinners—and, then the subject of grace feels at home; when the Law of the Mind operates on what is termed the affections, faith conducting them to objects suitable to their exercise.

If many persons will harangue and insist much, on the duty of *all* Men to love God—I presume they cannot mean *the exercise of an affection peculiar to the influence of a divine principle*, as the Law of the Mind. So likewise, much is said of the duty of loving the People of God

as

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as such, and His ways: though it is certain, mankind originally never was possessed of a SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE, nor discernment; and, of course, incapable of THIS Spiritual affection. I cannot, at present, see the propriety of such merciless use of terms, to enhance the guilt of Man, *already condemned*. There must be, in those acts, something congenial between the subject and the objects. Is our *affection*, or most *approved thought* led out upon a spiritual object? then surely it must argue the spring or subject to be spiritual.

This point well understood is, no doubt, calculated to relieve the breast of many of the Children of God—exercised with involuntary thoughts of evil; far from the approbation of their mind—but on the contrary, a subject of grace is ready to charge his treacherous powers, if I may so call them, to be still—to leave him to the enjoyment of divine and spiritual things: and, yet, even in the charge, upon the decision made—the choice—the most ardent desire of the subject; these traitorous—these treasonable powers operate against him; and, while the mind determines—while the will chooses—while the spiritual affections seem to be led out: and a charge given, not to destroy or disturb
this

this happy enjoyment—like as Dr. Watts states the case

— e'er one fleeting hour is past
 The flatt'ring World employs,
 Some sensual bait to seize my taste
 And to pollute my joys.

So that the eye catches some object—the ear hears something—the fancy roves after some delusive pleasure; and presently he is betrayed into the hands of a carnal frame—he wonders where he is gone, and mourns the case before God. Then, like the Apostle, complains 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?' As if he had said, how shall I be secure, or safe from these *plagues* of Sin? When shall I arrive to an uninterrupted enjoyment of those things, which have the approbation of my soul? Now 'I see, another Law in my Members, warring against the Law of my Mind, and bringing me into captivity to the Law of Sin; which is in my Members.'

But here let me observe. I think it may be granted, that, what may be denominated AFFECTION; being *thought with approbation, liking, or desire*, seem to be a *medium of exercise* both to a principle of grace, as the Law of the Mind, and indwelling Sin, as the Law in the Members: only, with this proviso.—
 Respecting

Respecting the former, it is spiritual—its objects are suitable to itself, and its end is, spiritual enjoyments to the glory of God. Respecting the latter, it is carnal, and its ends proposed are carnal delights. I think the Apostle makes this point clear, in his Epistle to the Galatians *chap. v. ver. 17.* ‘For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and spirit against the flesh;’ and, Romans viii. 8. John iii. 6. The flesh lusteth: that is, there is *liking*—a desire seems to be intended. Observe, there is *lusting*. The flesh lusteth, wills, or desires; covets, or seems to go out in desire after the object; without the concurrence of the Spirit or Mind. ‘The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are *contrary* the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.’

But, *Thirdly.* The Apostle experimentally and clearly, as in our text, discovered the distinction; and, the distinct operation of both—he had experience of it. It was not merely speculative, as if he had said,—I have *heard* of such a thing: nor, barely allowing it to be admissible in a list or arrangement of articles in confession of faith: but, the Apostle had sensible apprehension of it, and says, ‘*I see it.*’ He had painful and humbling

humbling experience of it, as he closely observed its operations; and considers one as a Law *in the Members*, the other *the Law of the Mind*.

I have no doubt but many Thousands of the dear People of God, have cause, *especially*, to bless God for this part of his sacred word: in which, the Apostle's experience *as a subject of grace* is so fully related. Many, from what they have found, of this nature, in them; and criminal inattention to God's word, have been ready, at times, to exclude hope, and say 'my spot is 'not the spot of God's children.' But, when, in reading or hearing this seventh Chapter to the Romans, we consider this as the experience of an Apostle, who had been so highly favoured—a Saint of God—one, who had been caught up into the third heaven—one, who had heard and seen the Lord Jesus, speaking to him from heaven—one, who had been eminently useful in the Church of God; and find this chapter standing upon sacred record concerning him, and this nice distinction pointed out in our text: we, through grace, are emboldened to hope—and conclude, that, as the Apostle once mourned here below—he went through scenes of distress—he found a body of sin and death, as we now do—

and that, he is arrived safe to glory: who can tell but we may also? Thus, I say, Thousands have reason to bless God especially for this part of his sacred word, as relating to christian experience *in this particular*; nor do I know of any part of the word of God more full and exprefs to the point than this.

I remember to have once read ‘the life of Mr. J. Bunyan’ at a time, when I was in deep distress of mind, and had been so for several years,—it was long before I could find courage to unbosom myself to any one. Meeting with this book providentially, the first question, I remember to have arisen in my mind, was ‘*whether this was a good man?*’ I thought, if I could ascertain who ‘John Bunyan’ was, it would be great satisfaction to my mind; and, whether he was a *good man* or *not*: for, I found my case so exactly described, in many particulars, that, if he had been a *bad man*, *I should have no hope* for myself: but, greatly relieved to find he was a *good man*. So now, when I read this chapter, and find it relates to the Apostle Paul, who was certainly a dear child of God—a subject of divine grace: from my full persuasion, that, if we are indeed the subjects of grace, we shall find it picturesque of us, individually, as though we

we beheld our natural face in a glass; and so, adopt the language of our text 'I see another Law in my Members warring against the Law of my Mind.'

I might observe further: that, the dear children of God have found *this, the Apostle's experience*, more especially precious, as they are led into deeper discoveries of the depravity of the Heart. It is nothing new, that, those who are but young in the ways of God, often estimate their STATE more by their *present sensation and enjoyment*, than by their *knowledge and experience* in divine things. Their present joy—fresh discoveries—new things opening to their perception, keep their minds *now* more intent: but, *by and by* these become, as it were, familiar; and they begin to question *then*, from the frame of their mind and abated fervour, whether ever they had known a change, in the experience of a work of grace pass upon them. They discover in them the prevalence of Sin—indwelling sin: and more of the depth of the iniquity of their hearts: upon which they are ready to exclaim 'can there, in reality, be grace implanted in such a sinful subject as I am?'—'Am I not deceived?' Now, to these, the Apostle's declared experience, in my text and its connexion, will be

be most salutary and precious. And thus, while they read in the text, of the Law in the Members warring against the Law of the Mind, it gives them encouragement still to hope and it leads them, though filled with fears—it leads them to the throne of grace for help.

II. Consider its painful influence, here lamented by the Apostle.

The Apostle, while he viewed, the Law in his Members, warring against the Law of his Mind, and making successful efforts, or *suffered* to be successful, he painfully laments it; and acknowledges that it brought him into captivity.

First. I think it may be necessary to premise: that, the Law in the Members may be defined A DISPOSITION TO ACT CONTRARY TO THE LAW OF THE MIND. And so difficult is it to draw the line, and so close the connexion, that it may often cause the subject of grace to fear lest the MIND be affected. They cannot distinguish but what it enters into the Mind: so as to possess their mind—their will—their consent—their approbation—their delight. So close and nearly connected the Ideas seem; that, I believe it is impossible for us to distinguish *nicely* the point, so as to answer every objection

objection of an anxious enquiring mind. So great a variety of ways Sin has to influence us in acting, that, I had almost said, its manner is infinitely diversified. The term 'infinite' is often used indifferently, about trifling matters; I think *not with truth*. Infinity not being proper to creatures—so with respect to the greatest disproportion which there is between one thing and another, the difference or disproportion cannot be infinite—thus, though Sin may act in a most innumerable and great variety of ways; yet, properly speaking, that variation is not infinite. But to return to my subject. We find the best and most satisfactory account on this head, in the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah *chap. xvii. ver. 9*: 'The Heart is *deceitful above all things*, and *desperately* wicked, who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins.' But I shall descend to two or three particulars of the vast variety of ways in which the 'Law in the Members' operates.

1. It operates in *love to this present World*. Observe, this is not, in the least degree, proper to the Law of the Mind. This will clearly appear, if it be admitted that IT IS SPIRITUAL—its circle of attraction is, of course, confined to *spiritual objects*; and the subject happy
alone

alone in the contemplation and enjoyment of them. It cannot be exercised upon any thing of a terrestrial nature. The possession of the greatest things of this world, could give no enjoyment to the Soul, as renewed by divine grace: it is certain then, that it cannot be exercised in the love of the world. 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' We find the language and triumph of faith is, 'To me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' Where, then, is the love of the world? A principle of grace as the Law of the Mind in every child of God cannot be exercised upon this; for, it is only proper to the Law in the Members: but, as every Believer is the subject of both principles the Apostle's caution is necessary, 'Love not the world'—take heed of its captivating power. Thus you may observe the Apostle Paul in his Second Epistle to Timothy, *chap. iv. ver. 10.* speaks of one; who, may be considered a subject of grace—DEMAS. The Apostle says 'Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.' Yet we find, in other respects, he is highly spoken of. If you consult the Epistle to the Colossians, *chap. iv. ver. 14.* and the 24th. *ver.* of Paul's Epistle to Philemon; in *both* he is highly spoken of. For which reason,

I am inclined to think that, we are to understand by this report 'Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world,' as referring more immediately to the Apostle's circumstances at that time; he being then in prison; and those who seemed to be especially connected with him were subject to great pains, penalties and sufferings—and, perhaps to death with him. Now, self-preservation wrought as a stimulus with Demas—he would forsake the Apostle—he would depart: and, in the same verse, the like is also said of Crescens, and of Titus: all departed. I do not speak thus, to justify him, or, as though I would commend his conduct herein; but, to shew that, in proportion as the selfish principle prevailed—the Law in the Members wrought in him to give the preference to a longer continuance in the present life—he had rather live longer, than be exposed to death with the Apostle for the cause of Christ: therefore he fled—he departed—he went to Thessalonica. Self-preservation is the first Law in nature; and, it is included in the idea, and may be considered as often having particular influence in producing those acts, proper to the Law in the Members. Thus it appears to have operated so powerfully,

as

as to cause a good man to forsake the Apostle, under his sufferings and imprisonment. My dear friends! we may consider the man blameable in this—nor would I attempt to vindicate him: but, Believer, realize yourself in the same circumstances—would you like to be found with a child of God in trouble, when, not merely your *reputation* but your *life* is exposed? I doubt not but you would find, in closer views, the interrogation realized would make the stoutest heart to tremble; unless divine grace was abundant in its communication. The Law in the Members operates strongly, in this respect, against the Law of the Mind—and captivates too. Hence, I consider this man only as being captivated.

2. It operates in the *love of sensual pleasure*. Here I might particularize, in a variety of instances: but I think it will be generally understood by you, what I mean by sensual pleasures—the *gratification of the sensual appetite*: whether it be pride, or, whether it be in any other sinful desire; it will come under the denomination of a gratification of the desires of the flesh—the Law in the Members. What *other* gratification is there proposed by us in many things, on which our desires are fixed? or, our thoughts

thoughts employed about? There is no other gratification than a sensual gratification. And, we find this to have been the case even with good men. Perhaps, some will ask, may a *good* man be thus taken captive? I answer, yes. Instance the case recorded in the second book of Samuel, *chap. xii. ver. 9.* in which God, by his Prophet, rebuked his servant David, as having '*despised* the commandment of the Lord.' He was, at that time, intoxicated with his sin—fast bound—captivated. 'Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; and hast taken his wife to be thy wife; and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me.' Now here, observe, the thoughts—the imaginations—the sensitive powers, or the gratifications in sensual pleasure, had so taken possession of the man, as to carry him away; similar to the tide, against all that would oppose—A captive completely—'Because thou hast despised me—and, taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.' Thus was verified those words in the Proverbs *chap. vi. ver. 33.* 'A wound and dishonour

honour shall he get, and his reproach shall not be wiped away.' It stands upon record, and will continue to be a reproach upon the character of David, to the end of time. That he found himself *dreadfully* though not *mortally* wounded by it, is evident from his fore lamentation in Psalm li. and, a *dishonour* it certainly was. Thus it is painfully true, that, Sin in the Members as a Law may operate, and carry captive. 'The good that *I would* I do not: but the evil which *I would not*, that I do.'

3. It may be said to operate, in *murmuring* or *repining at the dispensations of God*. Observe, not only in the love of the world; and in the desire of the gratification of the sensual appetite; but, it will operate in murmuring against God. Do any ask, who are they that murmur against God? I answer. Those who are not content with that allotment which God, in his all-wise distribution, sends them. To exemplify this, I shall observe. This Law in the Members will thus operate and discover itself in the *Parent*: when a dispensation of divine providence deprives him of his children—In the *man in affluence*; when God is suffering riches to make themselves wings, and flee away: the man, with all his carnal prudence and forethought

thought, cannot stop them—they flee away—they keep going, in spite of all his endeavours, and, . . . he murmurs against God! A good man may be suffered to do this, you say! Yes, *as captivated* by the Law which is in his Members. We have an instance of this kind, in Psalm lxxiii. *ver.* 12, 13, 14. The Psalmist there says ‘Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world, they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency; for all the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning.’ In verse the 3d. of the same Psalm, he says, ‘I was *envious* at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.’ He murmured—he repined against God: and, in the captivity of his thought, called in question the equity of God’s dispensations. ‘I was *envious* at the foolish;’ and says *ver.* 5. ‘They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men.’

Secondly, I would here proceed, to shew, that captivity may be defined, an UNWILLING COMPULSION. A subject forced unwillingly to some party, is captivity. And, this may be done with secret bands, if I may so speak, yet making the captive sure. It is by the
Law

Law in the Members: as that which works by coercive measures—powerfully, but secretly—more effectual, comparatively, than a cable rope in its operation: less subject to fail in its intended designs.

It is the Law *in* the Members; naturally possessing all and every one of the Members—ready, as it were, to assist each other, lest it should fail in its object. It will work night and day. Not one of our senses, I apprehend, but is combined, and in alliance, and may be considered as being connected to CAPTIVATE, and bring us to an unwilling compulsion. For illustration: if loyal subjects, for instance *Soldiers*, are fighting in defence of their Country, and fall into the hands of the enemy—either by stratagem or otherwise, are taken captive; yet, their *wills* are not carried captive—they are still loyal, and their allegiance the same to their King—their *hearts* are at home: and they are still ready *in will*, to shew their love to their Country, and to honour their King. Now, these men, thus taken captive, though ever so closely confined; are not *willing subjects*—they are not under dominion any farther than it may be denominated usurpation—their hearts are still with their prince.

Thus,

Thus, captivity may be illustrated, with reference to a child of God: though, it ought to be with *great caution* we proceed, in passing our judgment when such cases come before us. When we see a subject of grace, or, a person for whom, in other respects, there is ground for such conclusion, carried away with the force of temptation; we ought not to be hasty to pass sentence upon such an one—remembering that we are also in the body—‘let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.’ You may remember the case of that highly favoured servant of God—PETER—an Apostle of Jesus Christ; whose heart was with his master: and we find him most open and willing in profession, and confessing him. But, how awfully was he taken captive! through this Law which was in his Members warring against the Law of his Mind. His mind was with his master; and, as a good Soldier was a willing warrior for Jesus Christ, both *before* and *after* he had fallen by that temptation; in which he cursed and swore he did not know him. Awful indeed! you will say—but, his *heart* was with his master; ‘though all should deny thee, yet will not I.’ So great was the force of this Law, in the heat of the temptation

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tion. There was nothing deliberate in all this—he was hurried into it. Thus observe, consistent with our text, the Law of his Mind was not *co-operating* with the Law *in* his Members; but there was a contest—a war; and he was carried captive, in that particular, verifying my text—it being *against the Law of his Mind*.

2. The idea of being taken *captive*, should be totally excluded from the OPERATIONS OF GRACE. Grace, in its operation, is no *captivating power*—but is a DOMINION in the Soul; it is the lawful the reigning power. Sin, in its operation is *captivating*; but, it is deficient in, or wants *the Will* of the subject. Grace, in its influence, is not *captivating*, because it *has* uniformly and deliberately *the Will* of the subject. Observe, the operations of grace make willing; but, the operations of the Law of Sin, in their strongest efforts—lusting to counteract the deliberate choice of the Mind, do not make the subject willing: so that, though there is a Law, operating *as a Law*, shewing its power and exercising usurped authority—carrying captive: yet, I think it may be asserted, for the relief of those who feel its power—who fear God and hate Sin, that, it is no more than the Law *in* the Members which
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wars against the Law of the Mind, WITHOUT DOMINION—though its menacing power may cause much trembling. We find the Apostle in writing his Epistle to the Philippians, *chap. ii. ver. 12.* speaks of those who had obeyed, not as in his presence only, but also in his absence; exhorts, ‘work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.’

3. That, the MIND, as applied to the SOUL *renewed*, may be in perfect conformity to the Law of God; when the Law in the Members painfully operates in rebellion against him; and, the depraved imagination, acting in concert with the sensitive powers, may operate effectually to carry away captive. But then, here observe, it is *in* the Members, and, I at present conceive, with reference to a subject of grace, it is confined *to them*. The Apostle speaks of this Law in his Members, and, *the Law of his Mind*: as much as to say, there is this difference; the *former* is not necessarily there—the *latter* is necessarily there. By way of explanation, lest in this I should not be understood; this Law in the Members, is not from a necessity of *their nature*—it was not created there—

it is not connatural with them: but, the Law of the mind, as applied to a principle of divine grace, is congenial with itself, AS CREATED ANEW in Christ Jesus; and SO may be considered necessarily *the Law of the Mind*; which from its first implantation in regeneration, has never undergone a change, nor ever can.

As a principle of divine grace it invincibly operates, and has *dominion* in the Will of the subject; the opposite to which is asserted of the Law in the Members. Romans *chap. vi. ver. 14.* 'For Sin shall not have dominion over you'—being 'under grace.' Sin, as a Law, *in its dominion*, is an influence by which the Will operates to produce corresponding acts: but, with respect to every subject of grace, its utmost is no more than a captivating power—it can never again possess the Will of the subject—it is but *a Law, in the Members*, not necessarily so. Man was made upright—holy—pure; but, upon the first transgression, *all in Adam* fell under the total dominion of Sin—the effects of which are dreadful. Like a powerful enemy invading a country, with success—making entrance, and enacting Laws; which are not, properly, *the Laws of that country*; but they may be Laws

in it; through captivating power and force: thus, as applied to the Law *in* the Members. I see, as if the Apostle had said, how it is—I plainly discover it: there is in me the company of two armies—there is a Law *in* my Members, painfully operating to bring me into captivity; but — *as renewed by divine grace*, it is not the Law of my Mind: for, in the last verse of this Chapter, he adds ‘With the *Mind* I myself serve the Law of God; but with my flesh the Law of Sin.’

To conclude, The Law of Sin operates in our SENSES. How often does our eye betray us, and bring us into some evil, when, but the instant before, our minds were engaged on heavenly and divine things. For instance, in going to a throne of grace, sometimes a Child of God may go particularly with expectation of communion with God; when, suddenly something catches the eye, or the ear—the imagination works; and perhaps, even at a throne of grace he is taken from that solemn engagement, and forgets where he is. This is alone accounted for, upon this principle—the powerful operation of the Law *in* the Members, combined against a principle of grace, or the Law of the Mind. I would say farther; that it

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operates in its full force, clearly is seen, as illustrated by this plain simile: we cannot tell the force of a stream till it is dammed up—thus, with reference to the workings of the Law *in* the Members—watch them—try to *stop* them, and you will not fail to find their force: place before them, as some have done, sometimes in the ministry of the word, to no effect, expecting to restrain its force, the *folly* of it—consider, say they, the dreadful evil of it—see, that temptation which now works, and prevails, almost to carry you captive—observe the consequences of it, in such and such persons, ‘who have gone with scars and broken bones all their days.’ But, alas! it *will* operate in defiance of all—Nay, Hell itself, with all its horrors conceivable, were it possible Men could behold it; would be insufficient to prevent its captivating power—Divine grace in its influence is *alone* sufficient to repel its force. It operates as a Law—carries all before it, so far as *permitted*, as a Law *in* the Members. Were it not for such a testimony as this, in God’s word, we should be discouraged; with reference to our *Christian experience*. In speaking thus, I do not mean to encourage sin—I know that divine grace, in its influence can have no such effect. It is the distinguished

guished people of God, *in this subject*, I more especially address myself to this Morning—those, who know the plague of their heart, and are plagued with it.

My dear friends! be not discouraged; though, notwithstanding all past experience, this Law be found still to operate in *the Members—themselves* not being the subjects of a change for the better, even until death: a continual feeling sense of which, occasions deep humiliation before God; and calls for unremitted watchfulness and prayer. Hence our Lord's exhortation or direction—with which I shall conclude. *Matt. chap. xxvi. ver. 41.* 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the Spirit indeed is willing, but the Flesh is weak.' The Spirit indeed is willing, as influenced by the Law of the Mind, free in its operation, and is 'the Law of the Spirit of Life, in Christ Jesus:' but the Flesh is weak from the consideration of the Law *in the Members* warring against the Law of the Mind. 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation:' enter not into it, that ye be not carried captive by it. You and I shall be *exercised* by it, so long as we breathe; but, it is a mercy that ye *enter not* into it—like a person decoyed into prison, when,

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when, suddenly and unexpectedly, the door is shut upon him—he becomes a prisoner: and, none but the LORD JESUS CHRIST can proclaim liberty to such captives: giving a sensible manifestation of pardoning grace and mercy FREELY. Therefore, ‘Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.’

May God the Spirit command his blessing, in the application of his word, for Christ’s sake,—and, I add no more.



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